

NOAA FISHERIES ADJUSTS THE ATLANTIC BLUEFIN TUNA DAILY RETENTION LIMIT FOR THE GENERAL CATEGORY

General category landings rates have been slow to date in the Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) fishery. Based on a review of dealer reports, daily landing trends, and the availability of BFT on the fishing grounds, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) has determined that an increase in the daily retention limit in the General category is necessary in order to allow full use of the remaining quota available for the 2003 fishing year. Therefore, NOAA Fisheries adjusts the daily retention limit to three large medium or giant BFT per vessel. The increase in the daily retention limit is effective September 27, 2003 through October 31, 2003. The daily retention limit will revert back to one large medium or giant BFT on November 1, 2003.

The intent of this adjustment is to allow for maximum utilization of the remaining quota available for the 2003 fishing year by General category participants in order to help achieve optimum yield in the General category fishery, to collect a broad range of data for stock monitoring purposes, and to be consistent with the objectives of the HMS FMP.

Depending on the level of fishing effort and catch rates of BFT, NOAA Fisheries may determine that additional retention limit adjustments are necessary to enhance scientific data collection from, and fishing opportunities in, all geographic areas. Closures or subsequent adjustments to the daily retention limit, if any, will be published in the Federal Register. In addition, owners/operators may call the Atlantic Tunas Information Line at (888) 872-8862 or (978) 281-9305 for updates on quota monitoring and retention limit adjustments.

This FAX notice is a courtesy to BFT fishery permit holders to help keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information contact Brad McHale at 978-281-9260.

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for John H. Dunnigan
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Date